

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAR ES SALAAM 001272

SIPDIS

FOR AF AND INR/AA

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SUBJECT: IN CHARGE'S FAREWELL CALL, ZANZIBARI PRESIDENT KARUME BLASTS OPPOSITION, PREDICTS ELECTORAL VICTORY

REF: DAR ES SALAAM 1241 AND PREVIOUS

Classified by Chargi d'Affaires Michael S. Owen for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a farewell call, Zanzibari President Karume thanked Chargi for USG support of the isles, and said he was optimistic the ruling party CCM would triumph at the polls in October. Not surprisingly, he blamed the opposition CUF for recent difficulties during voter registration, but predicted polling would go smoothly despite CUF efforts to create unrest. Because Ramadan falls just prior to the elections, Karume expected the final weeks of the campaign to be quiet, but said the security forces are ready to deal with any "trouble-makers." He acknowledged the strong USG interest in the Zanzibari elections, and predicted that we would be satisfied with "the process and the outcome." End Summary.

¶2. (U) Charge on June 17 paid a farewell call on Zanzibari President Abeid Karume at his State House residence in Stonetown, Zanzibar. President and Mrs. Karume hosted Charge and wife for a lunch, and our hour-long one-on-one meeting in the President's study followed.

¶3. (U) Karume began the meeting by expressing his sincere appreciation for U.S. assistance to Zanzibar. Karume noted in particular USG efforts to combat HIV/AIDS via PEPFAR, our sustained support for primary and secondary education in Zanzibar, and our steadfast public support for the Muafaka process. The President also said he was pleased that Peace Corps volunteers are now based in Zanzibar once again, and related that one volunteer had been housed with a distant relative of his.

¶4. (C) Charge reiterated our strong support for the Muafaka process, and noted that the USG had provided significant support to the Zanzibar Election Committee (ZEC) to help create the Permanent Voters Registry (PVR) and to prepare for the upcoming elections. Charge noted that we continue to be concerned that there are problems with the PVR, and that the elections might not run smoothly, and asked for Karume's assessment.

¶5. (C) Karume predictably took the opportunity to blast the opposition Civic United Front (CUF), blaming them for attempting to disrupt the process of voter registration, and more generally for "stirring up unrest." As on previous occasions, Karume charged that CUF had attempted to register underage voters, and had tried to intimidate CCM supporters from registering. The President claimed that CUF hard-liners would attempt to disrupt polling as well, but said the security forces and the ZEC were well-prepared to maintain calm and run well-organized elections.

¶6. (C) Charge said we remain concerned that there may have been a significant number of duplicate registrations, and noted that in some districts the number of registered voters is twice the expected number. Karume countered that some districts had experienced substantial population growth since the last census, and noted that if anyone has a question about the registration, there are established appeal procedures that everyone should follow. The appeal process is working well, he said, and people should follow the procedures, rather than making "wild allegations" such as those made by CUF.

¶7. (C) Asked about the likely outcome of the elections, Karume acknowledged that the CUF has a "significant following," and that it would be a hard-fought race. The President predicted that the CCM would ultimately prevail however, saying "our strength is growing and CUF's is declining." Karume again lambasted CUF party chairman Seif Hamad, saying that he had already publicly stated that CUF would launch a "mass demonstration" if it is defeated in the polls. Charge noted that Hamad had said the demonstrations would be non-violent, and would only take place if CUF felt it had been cheated (ref). Karume charged that CUF had a violent record, and would in any

event inevitably claim it was cheated if it is defeated.

18. (C) The President said he believed the prospects for violence during the campaign would be mitigated by the fact that Ramadan will last from approximately October 4 through November 3. Thus the four weeks prior to the October 30 elections should be calm, as Muslims in the isles will be focused on their religious obligations. Holding rallies or large public gatherings during Ramadan would be "against our traditions," Karume said.

19. (C) Charge concluded the meeting by reiterating our strong interest in seeing free, fair, and non-violent elections in October, and said the USG would be watching the campaign and polling very closely. We urged all parties to refrain from violence, intimidation, or trickery, and allow the people of Zanzibar to choose their leadership fairly. A questionable electoral process or post-election violence would raise serious concern in Washington, and would deal a heavy blow to the all-important tourism sector. Karume said he understood and appreciated our interest in the Zanzibar electoral process, and said he remained optimistic that all would go well and that he would be re-elected President in October. "You will be satisfied with the process and the outcome," he said.

110. (C) Comment: Karume appeared supremely confident of a CCM victory in October, even though he did acknowledge that CUF would be a formidable opponent. All indications are that it will be an extremely close race, and Karume (as well as the CUF leadership) will almost certainly have a difficult time controlling some of the party hard-liners as polling day nears. It will be vitally important for us to continue reminding Karume and the CCM and CUF leadership of our strong interest in free and fair elections, and to monitor the process closely to detect fraud or intimidation. End Comment.

OWEN